



CONNECTICUT AFL-CIO

56 Town Line Road, Rocky Hill, CT 06067
860-571-6191 fax: 860-571-6190

Testimony of Lori J. Pelletier, Secretary-Treasurer
Connecticut AFL-CIO before the Public Health Committee
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Good afternoon Senator Handley, and Representative Sayers and members of the Public Health committee. I am Lori Pelletier, Secretary-Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO. I am here on behalf of the 211,000 union men and women from all across this great state to testify on the following bill.

Proposed H.B. No. 6693 An Act Concerning Creation Of A State Health Care Plan.

First let me say that we applaud this committee's effort to deal with the growing problem of health care in this state. Unfortunately my affiliates and their members face the onslaught of diminished benefit levels every time they sit at a negotiating table, and a perfect example of this was what happened last year at Sikorsky.

It's an extremely uneven playing field when it comes to insurance coverage, and many employers, good employers are struggling with the decision to provide health care or not. One way to begin to repair this horribly broken system is to make it easier and more cost effective for employers to provide health care. Universal Health care is just what the doctor ordered!

As we all know, just because someone doesn't have health insurance doesn't mean they don't get sick or injured it just changes the treatment options. Treatment is often in the emergency room where it is most expensive, instead of at your Doctor when the condition first arises.

For the past twenty five years the Connecticut AFL-CIO has supported a Single Payer health care system. Single payer comes from the fact that doctors and hospitals are paid by one organization: a single payer. By having only one payer, you can simplify the health care system enormously.

1. Single payer saves lives because everyone has health insurance. According to the Institute of Medicine, 18,000 people die each year across this country just because they have NO HEALTH CARE coverage!
2. Single payer saves time. If you were to accumulate all the time spent by doctors and hospitals on the infinite number of insurance forms (there are nearly 1500 separate insurance carriers nationwide), all that time could be spent on patients instead of paperwork.

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3. Single payer saves money because have only one organization handling all the administrative duties of this health care system greatly decreases the cost of that administration. **Over 30%** of every health care dollar goes to paperwork, overhead, CEO salaries, profits and other non-clinical costs. As compared to Medicare which operates at about 3%.

4. Finally single payer is about choices. Within a single payer system, patients could decide which doctor or hospital they want to utilize, instead of having to pick off a list provided by some HMO. Patients would also be covered even if they lose their job or are starting their own business. Workers wouldn't be stuck in a job because it provides health care coverage.

Health care costs are responsible for nearly 50% of all bankruptcies filed in the U.S. today, and four out of ten adults under 65 have problems related to medical bills or debt according to research done by the *Kaiser Family foundation*.

Billions of dollars are spent annually on health care yet millions of Americans and nearly 400,000 Connecticut residents are without health care coverage, according to a *Families USA Report*.

The current crisis in our health care system needs to be addressed immediately. The longer we wait the harder it will be to correct the problems. Connecticut residents deserve better and single payer is the answer.

Thank you for holding this public hearing and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.